



# The President's Daily Brief

*April 10, 1975*

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SOUTH VIETNAM

*The communists are increasing military pressure on the approaches to Saigon. Sharp communist attacks against two key provincial capitals to the east and southwest of the capital city yesterday may be the prelude to a larger operation nearer Saigon.*

The ground attack against the provincial capital of Xuan Loc and surrounding areas was conducted by units of the North Vietnamese 6th and newly arrived 341st divisions, and was preceded by a heavy bombardment. Most of the attackers were forced out of the city yesterday, but heavy fighting resumed today. Communist units nearby hold positions overlooking Route 1 leading to Saigon. If they can block the road, a large number of government troops will be cut off.

Government regional commanders reacted quickly and moved units of the South Vietnamese 18th Division from outlying field positions into Xuan Loc. Armored units were sent to the new front from Tay Ninh Province, and airborne division reinforcements came from Saigon.

To the southwest of Saigon, small advance elements of the North Vietnamese 5th Division struck the Long An Province capital of Tan An, its nearby airfield, and several stretches of vital Route 4 connecting the capital with the delta provinces. This attack was swiftly repulsed and Highway 4 is open.

A widespread increase in communist military action throughout much of the delta may be imminent. At the moment, the level of fighting is about the same as in the past few days; the heaviest communist-initiated activity was concentrated in Dinh Tuong and Kien Giang provinces.

It is doubtful that within the next week the communists will feel strong enough for an all-out assault against Saigon. They probably will wait

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until additional units arrive from the north before attempting such a move.

Meanwhile, one of Hanoi's last two reserve divisions--the 308th--may soon follow the North Vietnamese Army 1st Corps and three other reserve divisions to South Vietnam. Communications between the division and the 1st Corps--which together with the 312th, the 320B, and the 338th divisions has already reached northern South Vietnam--strongly suggest that the 308th will follow. If these four divisions and their command headquarters are indeed bound for the Saigon front, they could arrive in about a month.

The communists are now in complete control of Nha Trang and are busy collecting abandoned weapons and equipment.

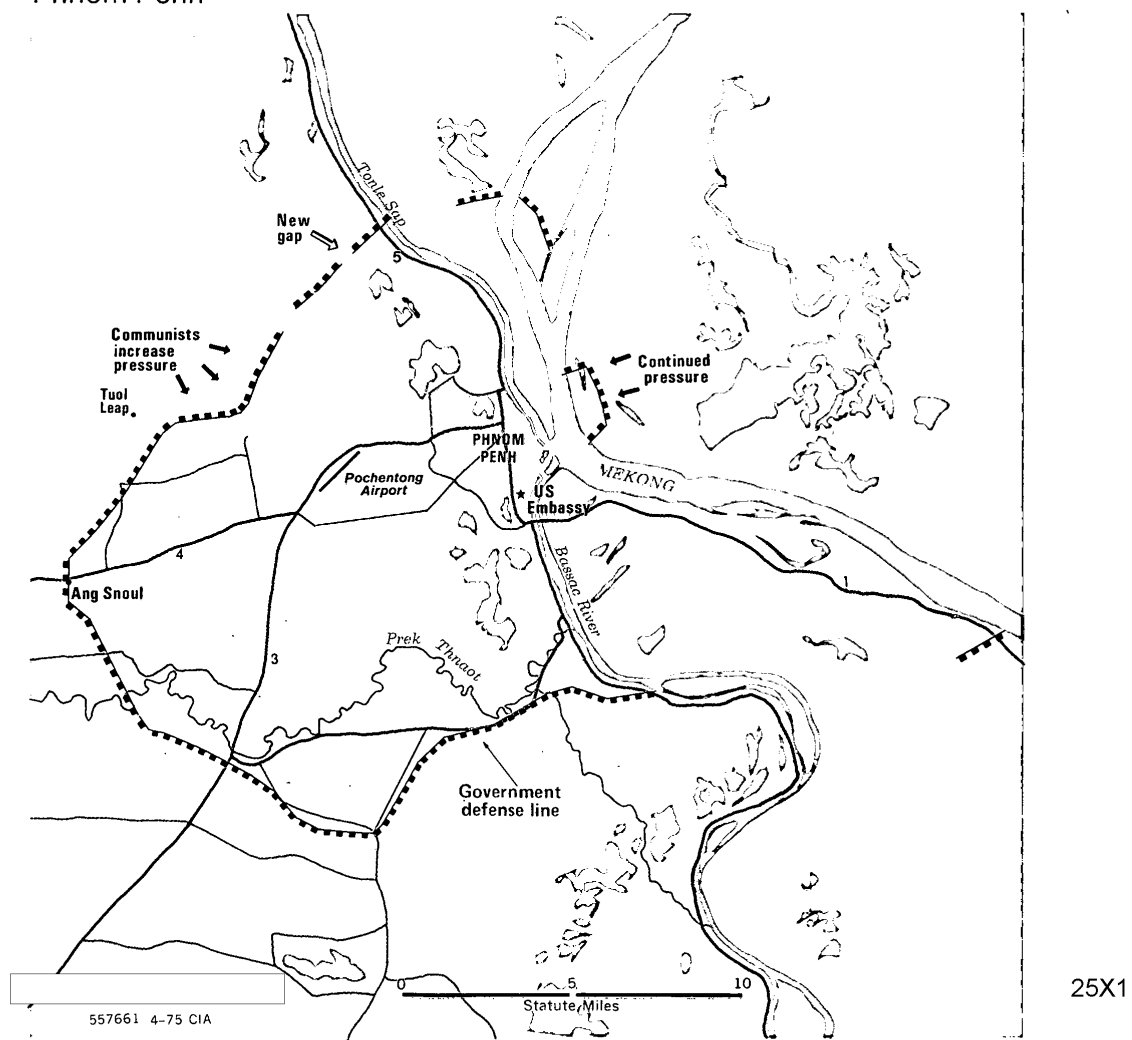
[redacted] at least half of the shops are open, Saigon's currency is still being used, and North Vietnamese flags are flying over all former government civil and military offices in the city.

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The communist occupation of Cam Ranh was apparently slow, taking place some days after the retreat of South Vietnamese forces.

## Phnom Penh



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## CAMBODIA

*The erosion of Phnom Penh's outer defenses has reached a point at which a major Khmer communist penetration and/or a general collapse of government units could occur with little warning.*

Khmer communist forces made their closest advance yet toward Pochentong airport late Tuesday by forcing government troops to abandon a village only four miles from the airfield. Counterattacking government units have failed to retake the village, and US defense attachés report that government forces in this area may wilt rapidly in the face of continued insurgent attacks.

Although only rocket and artillery rounds landed near Pochentong yesterday, the captured village is within recoilless rifle range of the airport terminal and control tower. A US aircraft was badly damaged by artillery fire this morning; airlift operations were at least temporarily interrupted.

The communists also opened a new gap in the defense line six miles north of the airfield, following the unauthorized withdrawal of a government unit. Intercepted voice radio messages disclose that the communists are planning to move through the gap toward the Tonle Sap River and isolate a number of government units and artillery positions.

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The communists are also maintaining pressure on government units on the east bank of the Mekong River near the capital. Government holdings in the area have now been reduced to a relatively small enclave directly opposite the city and a few other isolated positions. Recoilless rifle or mortar fire from the east bank has begun to fall near Phnom Penh's waterfront, and communist gunners may soon be within range of the heavily populated sections of the city, including the US embassy.

Communist forces along Route 4 west of Phnom Penh do not yet pose a direct threat to Pochentong airport or to the city itself. Fighting along the highway yesterday remained heavy, however, and another outlying government position was abandoned. Further government withdrawals in this sector could endanger the army's main ammunition dump just south of the highway.

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*We summarize below Ambassador Dean's brief assessment, received yesterday, of the government's dire military straits and of the general mood in Phnom Penh.*

Although it is not yet apparent when or how the communists will strike against Phnom Penh, there are a number of possibilities, among which are the following:

--A massive artillery barrage against Phnom Penh proper, designed to cripple the city and cause panic, followed by a demand for immediate surrender.

--Similarly heavy artillery attacks directed against Pochentong airport to halt the US airlift and starve the city and its defenders into submission.

--An all-out ground assault, possibly timed to coincide with Khmer New Year holidays beginning on April 13.

A number of recent incidents at Pochentong airport during the evacuation of Cambodian employees of the US mission indicate that the level of anti-American feeling in Phnom Penh is rising. As for the mood of senior officials in Phnom Penh, they appear determined to maintain public morale until Congress has acted on the supplemental aid question. In the event of a negative vote, government leaders will use the US as a scapegoat for impending defeat. Government leaders have warned that wholesale panic would follow a negative congressional vote and that the government would collapse within 24 hours.

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## PORTUGAL

*Most of the major political parties will probably accept the Armed Forces Movement's demands this week and seal the military's dominance of the government for at least the next three to five years.*

The more moderate of the political parties--the Socialists, the center-left Popular Democrats, the Monarchists, and the center-right Social Democratic Center--have serious misgivings about the Movement's "Platform for Understanding." They seem prepared, however, to sign up rather than risk being labeled as opponents of the Movement. These parties will try to salvage what they can from the election on April 25 in hopes that the Movement can eventually be persuaded to give civilians a greater role in ruling and to curb communist influence. Only five small parties of the extreme left have announced they will not sign.

Movement leaders have long been impatient with the inability of the parties to work together, an impatience that probably accounts in part for the military's unwillingness to turn the government over to civilians. Admiral Rosa Coutinho, an influential member of the Revolutionary Council with an excellent chance to move into a top position, told reporters last week that the parties were "too busy to lead the revolution" and were leaving the responsibility to the Movement, which he called ill-equipped for the job.

Coutinho suggested that a new party, a "civilian Armed Forces Movement," be formed to "exchange ideas, analyze the situation, and construct the future Portuguese socialism." As envisioned by Coutinho, the new party would include several of the parties that now cooperate with the Movement. It would be ideologically situated between the Portuguese Communists and Socialists. An effort to form such a party might be made after the election of April 25.

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The new government, meanwhile, is concentrating on Portugal's economic problems. In a press conference on Tuesday, Prime Minister Goncalves announced that an emergency economic plan will be completed within three weeks. It will aim at curbing rising unemployment and stabilizing the cost of living.

Goncalves warned about Western attitudes toward Portugal and of a possible economic boycott by nations that disapprove of the direction Portugal is taking. He cited the departure of several international businesses in the past year as evidence of the lack of Western support.

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